

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

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CONFESSIONS OF A CARETAKER.

A SERIAL STORY.

By "RITA."

Author of "*Dave Durdan*," "*Dayby and Joan*,"
"*My Lord Conceit*," etc.

CHAPTER III. AN IDEAL CHILDHOOD.

ONCE I knew Miss Kate's real history I never felt quite at ease about her, and I don't think poor old Mr. Vining did either.

As for the child herself, she was the same wicked, winning little madcap as ever. The masculine element in her nature—which had led her to associate with stable-boys, and climb trees, and play cricket in tomboy fashion in the old days at Richmond—was gradually disappearing, perhaps for want of encouraging associates to applaud her "pluck."

Sir Rupert gave her free leave to go where she would at Dayrell Court, and think she took advantage of it, and soon knew every room, and every nook and corner of the park and gardens, by heart.

The weeks drifted on, and I wondered, sometimes, that master did not want to go home. Sir Rupert had long left, and was on the Continent somewhere, so Mrs. Crossley told me.

Miss Kate was very fond of reading the books in the library. Queer enough some of them were, too, and the things she'd tell me out of them were enough to make one's hair stand on end. She took it in her head, too, that she'd begin to write a book herself. Dear, dear! I have nearly died with laughter over some of the stuff she'd put in—of all the jumbles of style and composition, not to say the periods of history that she mixed up! And if I'd correct her she'd get so cross, and say in her proud, little way, "Jane, you are

getting presumptuous" (she did so love long words; bless her). "You think because you keep a 'diry' that you are an authoress. But anybody could keep a diry, and yet couldn't write a book. It wants great skill to write a book—and—and imagination."

"Yes, Miss Kate," I'd say, gravely. "I know that; but I've no imagination. Only it seems to me that people would prefer to read of things that actually happened, and were true, sooner than of things one invents oneself."

Then she'd run up a tree and make faces at me, and probably keep me waiting there for an hour or two before she'd choose to come down. She called it "breaking my proud spirit." I think it was a phrase out of one of the old romances about Barons, and Knights, and beautiful ladies that she was so fond of.

However, in spite of her making fun of my diary, I found one night that she had been keeping one herself. It was in her drawer hidden under a pile of her little night-gowns, and I was looking over them to see if they wanted buttons or mending—for she was a rare one at tearing off buttons and frills, was Miss Kate—when I found a little brown pocket-book, with brass clasps and lines all ruled, and I opened it to see what it was. When I'd read half through—well—I'll just copy some in here and see if it will make any one else laugh as I did.

Mind, the child wasn't quite nine years old. This is how she began:

"Why shouldn't I my thoughts confide to my Diry, as I know Jane Watts does? Who, you will ask, is Jane? She is my attendant, and I am a poore imprisoned maiden, waiting all forlornly for capture and release.

"In parragraphs will I write my confessions, for truly so they do who are great authors of romance. And to thee, alone, oh Dory! will I confide the secrets of my breaking heart!

"Sir Rupert is a mighty Earl, and great are his posseshuns; but surely an evil catiff is he also; and the people hate him with a loyal, honest hatred; and he keeps me here because I, too, hate him; nor can he breake my proud spirit to subjection.

"(N.B.—Truly thou dost know, oh Dory, that, between yourself and me, this is all lies; but that matters not since we know it; and all romancerists are liars.)

"I walked abroad to-day in my palace grounds; and the knights were there, their baldrics and vestments ablaze in the golden sunlight; and one looked at me as if he pitied me—in sooth, a goodly youth. I extended him my white hand, glittering with rings and jewels, and he walked by my palfrey's side, and he confided to me that he would devote his life to my service; so I went to bed happy and content.

"(The truth of this is that I walked about Dayrell Court with Jane—but that doesn't sound romantick, and I mean my Dory to beat her's)

"The aristocracy of this broad England are but gory tyrants thirsting for gain and war, and drinking blood like vampyres. Why am I not Queen? Truly well would I reign, and every one would be happy; and one day I would wed my gentle knight, when he had fought for me in the Holy Land, my glove born proudly aloft on his silver helmet; and ere the year was out we would have sons and daughters of our own to bear the good old name, and tell their children in time to come how well the brave Sir Agincourt had loved the prisoned captive—the fair and gentle Geraldine."

I had got so far, when suddenly a tremendous bang on the side of my head made me stagger all to one side, and the book fell from my hands.

Before me stood Miss Kate; or rather, a perfect little fury that had Miss Kate's flashing eyes and crimson mouth; a little passionate creature, who stormed and raved at me in fashion very unlike what I should have expected from "the fair and gentle Geraldine."

"You beast!" she cried, wrathfully. "You mean, spiteful thing! How dare you read my book? It was mine—my secrets—a sacred trust; and now, now you

know it, and I never meant any one—any one in all the wide world—to read one single line!"

"Then, my dear," I said, coolly, "you should have locked it up where no one could see it. How was I to know what it was? I thought it was only a little pocket-book."

She burst into sobs and tears, and picked up her diary, and then deliberately tore out every page in it, and tore the pages again into fragments, and stamped on them in her rage, calling me every name she could think of, or had read in these extraordinary romances of hers. And really, I didn't know what to do. The child seemed like one possessed. I let her storm and rave for a while, and then told her I must fetch master if she wouldn't be quiet; and after a while I suppose she got tired of it, for her fits of passion were short-lived, though they were violent, and she went back to bed, and covered herself up with the clothes; and, after telling me she wouldn't speak to me for a month, said, quite meekly, "Good night, Jane," and went to sleep.

Dear me! In after years how often I remembered that night! How often I wondered if the passionate, impulsive nature might not have been controlled by wise and gentle care and training! But there, she had no chance, poor little Miss Kate, and the future had to be her school, and the lessons of life her discipline.

Next morning she was quite friendly with me; but the word "diary" was never mentioned between us.

It was more than six months now since mistress had died, and all that time Miss Kate had lived this wild, untrained life—no lessons, no governess, no discipline; nothing but the adoring love of her adopted father, and the learning she got herself from books and papers. I suppose she was perfectly happy; she seemed so. But I'm afraid she read more romances than were good for her, and now and then showed a disposition to revel in "original sin," as the clergy call it; which proved that the little reckless dare-devil of the Richmond days was still in existence.

At last, master informed me that he was going home, and I was very glad to hear it.

The place looked desolate, though, without the old lady, and I could see how master missed her more and more, and how day by day he grew more feeble and took less interest in life; and when I used to ask him about the child, and whether he

would not like her to have a governess again, he'd only say:

"Oh, let her be, Jane; let her be. Youth is short. I only wish her to be happy."

So, after all, it was not so much of a surprise or shock to us when, one day, the old gentleman took to his bed and never rose again; though he seemed to have no pain or illness—only just to drift away quietly and slowly.

The end came sooner than any of us expected, and then poor little Miss Kate was left by will to the guardianship of Sir Rupert Dayrell, for so he and master had arranged; and when she came of age she was to have all master's money, subject to a few legacies to distant relatives and servants—for we were all most generously remembered, and I was to have fifty pounds a year as long as I lived and attended to Miss Kate.

And then came bustle and confusion, and lawyers fussing and meddling with everything, and writing to Sir Rupert, who didn't come till two weeks after the funeral.

Of course the Richmond property had to be sold, and so I and Miss Kate had to go to Dayrell Court, though I didn't like the idea at all. I thought it very odd, too, of Sir Rupert when he told me that, out of deference to Mr. Vining's wishes, he had promised not to tell Miss Kate her history until she was old enough to understand it.

For the present, he merely wished her to look upon him as the guardian appointed by Mr. Vining.

It seemed to me that he couldn't have much affection for his own child, when he could let her be under his roof in ignorance of the relationship between them. But he was a strange man, and he told me he hated children. He engaged a governess for Miss Kate, and also a house-keeper and a few servants to keep the place in order; and that done, he took himself off again, and for years we never saw him.

About this time I did the most foolish thing I ever did in my life—I got married.

I fell in love with one of the under gardeners, a handsome ne'er-do-weel, with a tongue that could win an angel from heaven; and of course he knew all about my fifty pounds a year, and that I had saved a nice little sum in the five years I had been at the Court, and somehow or other he got round me and we were married

quite secret, for I didn't want to leave Miss Kate, and he didn't want me to lose the fifty pounds a year. I thought he was just perfect; but then I suppose my eyes were blind with love, for I was soon undeceived. He drank, and he was always asking me for money, and nice goings on I heard of afterwards; though, living at the Court as I did, I never knew of them at the time.

Then one day a bomb-shell in the shape of a letter arrived from Sir Rupert. He said I was to bring Miss Kate at once to Paris. She was to go to a foreign school to be finished, and he had heard of an excellent one somewhere near Paris, and he would meet us at the station and take us to his hotel.

Miss Kate was not to delay for clothes and things, she could get them all there; and he wrote full instructions as to trains and steamers so that we might have no trouble, and sent us the money in a registered letter, and of course there was nothing for it but to obey.

I didn't like leaving my handsome young husband, but of course he vowed and promised all sorts of sweet things, and as for the fifty pounds a year that was all right so long as I stayed at the Court, even if Miss Kate was at school. So we started off with ourselves, she, full of glee, and wonder, and delight, and I—well, just a little bit low-spirited, so to say, but not sorry to have the chance of seeing foreign parts, of which I'd read a great deal, and heard a great deal from Miss Kate. But had I known what the English Channel was like, not wild horses would have dragged me across—no, nor hundreds of pounds as reward.

Talk of agonies—and that child only laughing, and enjoying it all as cool and as comfortable as if she were in the library at Dayrell Court. But there, as the novelists say, I will "drop the curtain" over the horrors of that first voyage, and reserve the accounts of my foreign experiences for another chapter.

CHAPTER IV. FROM CALAIS TO PARIS.

I FELT a limp and melancholy object as I reached the deck of the steamer, and found that we were close to the French coast. A very wretched-looking coast it was, too; nothing but sandbanks and low, stunted trees.

Then as for the town, Calais, as they called it—of all the dirty, miserable, ill-

smelling places! And oh, the men on the pier, with their blue blouses and cotton trousers; actually cotton! Why, no English working man would have condescended to wear such things. And their language—Lord deliver us! What a language it was! I'm sure no decent Christian could make head or tail of it!

Then the way they seized our luggage—never so much as “by your leave” even—and started off with it, goodness knows where; and the rushing, and the screaming, and the noise! I was fairly bewildered, and I don't know what I should have done but for some gentleman, who had been talking to Miss Kate—a Frenchman, but spoke English beautifully—and he came forward and explained that they had to examine the luggage (baggage they called it) for the Customs, but it would be all right if we'd give him the keys; and he meanwhile showed us the Paris train, and got us a carriage which was so high that we had to climb up as if it were the wall of a house, and then he ran back and said the “baggage” was all right, and would we like anything to eat? I felt too ill and queer to have touched anything, but he marched Miss Kate off to the “bouffey,” whatever that was, and she came back by-and-by and said she'd had soup and chicken, and felt ever so much better. I suppose that was because she was a growing girl, and with a stomach steady enough to stand that awful sea, which I certainly hadn't.

Then the Frenchman he brought us in fruit, and what they called “sandwiches.” Poor benighted things! A long loaf cut in half, with a piece of badly-cured ham in the middle of it.

But then, what can you expect of foreigners? I'm sure I never thought so much of my own country, or was so pleased at being a British subject as when I saw what other nations were like, and had an experience of their ways on that trip to Paris. Not that French folk call it so, but “Par-ree,” though why I never could understand, seeing that *ris* spells “*ris*,” sure enough.

Well, that young French fellow, he travelled all the way with us, and very nice and amusing he was, though he spoke very fannily sometimes. But Miss Kate seemed to understand him, and he cheered her up, and kept her from worrying me; for I was very down, what with leaving my Tom, and having grave doubts about the daughter of the man who kept

the “Dayrell Arms,” a forward young minx, who was always making eyes at him—Tom, I mean—and hated me like poison, because she wanted to marry him herself.

Thinking of her and of him, and of the horrors of that dreadful Channel, I fell asleep, and didn't wake till quite late in the afternoon. I felt really hungry by that time, and was glad enough of one of those loaf-sandwiches, and some of the red sour vinegar they call wine.

Miss Kate and the Frenchman were now quite good friends; and he had given her his card (by the way, he was a Count, for Count D'Aurigny was printed on it), and she had told him she was going to school in Paris, and her guardian's name, and everything about herself.

I was surprised to find he treated her just like a grown-up young lady, and she only a slip of a girl of fourteen, and little, too, for her age, though as pretty as ever, and with quite grown-up manners, so to say.

I don't think she found the journey long—at least, she said she didn't—and the young Count he told her lots about “Par-ree,” and what a beautiful city it was, and how life there was life; and the Booleyvards, and the theatres, and the gardens, and the cafeys, and Heaven knows what; and so it went on till we saw hundreds and thousands of lights flashing up through the darkness of the night; and the train puffed and screamed itself into a great big station, and there, thank goodness, was Sir Rupert looking out for us, and I felt as if my troubles were ended.

I believe Miss Kate told him how kind the young French Count had been, for they lifted their hats and talked away in a language I didn't understand, but which I concluded was “parley-voing,” as we say in England; and then we were put into a cab and driven along all sorts of fine streets and places until we reached Sir Rupert's hotel.

I thought it was a palace myself, never having seen anything so grand or so large in my life; and then we were shown into a lovely room all furnished in red velvet, and with a smaller one opening out of it which was for me; and such beds, with a gold crown let into the ceiling, and with lace curtains falling from it—lovely! I'm sure the Queen never had a better room than was that of Miss Kate's, and mine just the same, only smaller.

We took off our cloaks and hats, and

very dusty and dirty we looked; not to be wondered at after travelling all day; and Miss Kate unfastened her dress-bodice and tucked up her pretty hair, and she said to me: "Now, Jane, for a good splasher!" and emptied all the water into the basin, and then looked for some soap. But there was only an empty dish on the wash-stand.

"What am I to do, Jane?" she said. "I can't get these blacks off without soap."

"I'm sure I don't know, miss," I said. "Shall we ring and ask for some?"

"But they only understand French," she said, "and I really don't think I know a whole sentence. Let me see——"

She sat down and thought a moment. Then she said:

"Yes, I think I can manage it. You ring the bell."

I looked about, and at last found the bell. There was something printed on a card just above it; but I didn't notice that, and being in French, I couldn't have read it if I had.

Meanwhile, Miss Kate slipped off the skirt of her dress as well as the bodice, and gave it me to brush, and there she was, capering about the room in her white petticoat, and with bare arms and neck, when there came a knock at the door, and in walked—a waiter! I gave a scream, and Miss Kate looked astonished.

"Vous n'ate par la fam-der-shom," she said in French, and I really felt quite proud to think how well she could speak it.

He shook his head.

"No, mamselle," he said, in English. "You rang one time, that is for waiter (garsong); deux foirs (twice), for the fam-der-shom. Pardon—I will tell her."

"Lord's sake! Miss Kate," I cried, "why didn't you throw your cloak round you? What will that man think? He'll tell every one in the hotel."

"Oh," said Miss Kate, laughing fit to kill herself, "oh, Jane, wasn't it funny? How astonished he did look! And I'd got my sentence so nice and then had to make up another, and all the time his English was better than my French. Oh, isn't it lovely? What times I shall have!"

"I think he was very rude," I answered, for I felt rather cross. "I'm sure he stared enough."

"Perhaps he admired me," she said, saucily, as she danced off to a long mirror to have a look at herself. "Frenchmen think a great deal of a Mees Anglaise, you

know. If I had been seventeen instead of fourteen, now——"

And then she danced to and fro, for all the world like a leaf coquetting with the wind—her little feet twinkling under the lace and cambric of her skirt, and her pretty white arms now tossed above her head, now resting on her hips, just for all the world—as I told her—like a ballet-girl whom I'd seen in a Christmas pantomime once in London.

At last the "fam-der-shom" came—a young, pert-looking female in a big frilled cap, with long ends flying down her back.

Miss Kate stopped her capers and began to think of her French again.

"Mademoiselle mer dermonde!" said the girl, quickly. The words seemed to rattle off her tongue like peas dropping on a plate.

"Wee—wee," said Miss Kate, "Je—Je d'sire——" She stopped, then darted off to the wash-stand, and took up the empty dish. "Ill ny—cr—par der savong," she went on, getting very red and hot beneath the cool, impudent stare of that French hussy.

"Savong!" says the girl, and laughs. "Mais que vous êtes drôles, vous Anglais! Toujours savong. Nous n'avong pas de savong à l'hôtel, mademoiselle. Il fo que vous l'apportay voo-maim. Compreny?"

Kate shook her head.

"Voo-maim. She means myself," she said; "but I never thought of bringing any. What am I to do? I can never get all this black off without soap. Just look at my hands!"

"Tell her to ask the waiter to ask Sir Rupert," I said.

"Oh no," cried Miss Kate, "I can't put all that into French. What a nuisance! Now—why, what is that idiot grinning at? Alley dong—go!" she cried, crossly, and pointed to the door. The fam-der-shom disappeared immediately, and Miss Kate and I had to do without "savong."

After a time Sir Rupert came and knocked at the door, and took her down to dinner; so she explained her difficulties. He laughed, and told her that they never supplied soap in foreign hotels, though she was not to think from that that they never used it themselves—which most English tourists declared—but they expected travellers to have it in their travelling-bags as naturally as they had brushes and combs, and other toilet necessities.

Then they went away, and I was left alone, and sat by the window, looking out

on the brilliant streets, and the hurrying crowds, and feeling rather dull and lonesome, until presently the friendly waiter, who spoke English, came in and brought me some "dinnay," as he called it; and very nice it was, though I'd rather have had one glass of English beer than that whole bottle of red wine which was served with it.

And then in an hour or so, Miss Kate came up, being tired, and sleepy, and quite ready for bed; and provided with two cakes of "savong" which Sir Rupert had given her, so, as she said, we might both go to sleep feeling clean.

And I unpacked her box, and put out her best frock for the morning, when Sir Rupert was to take us to see some of the sights of Paris. And when she was in bed, and asleep, I went to my own room and soon followed her example.

CHAPTER V.

SOME IMPRESSIONS OF FOREIGN LIFE.

"TRAVELLERS see strange sights." Well, that's as true a proverb as any King Solomon ever made. I'm sure if I was to say all the strange things I heard and saw in that one fortnight when I stayed in Paris, no one would credit it. Indeed, I couldn't put down half, or I shouldn't be let publish my book by the Lord Chamberlain, who I've heard is very particular, and reads everything that goes to the press in order that the morals of the English people should be kept pure; and, indeed, it is much to their credit, and it's a pity there's no Lord Chamberlain in France, for they need one if ever any people did.

They may be better now—I don't know. But, of course, I was there many, many years ago, and I hear that everything is changed, and they've got a Republic; and, besides, heaps more English people go abroad now to what they did then, especially to Paris, and no doubt they've done them good, and taught them it's not decent to have pictures and statues that haven't any clothing—not as much as Eve in the Garden of Eden—staring at you from shop-windows, and public galleries; and as for the brazen creatures in those "cafes," and on their Booleyvards—well, I can't trust myself to write of them.

Talk of Frenchmen being polite! Well, so are grinning apes in a menagerie polite. Bowing, and smirking, and leering in the face of every decent woman, and thinking no more of standing at a theatre or cafe door, and passing remarks on you from top

to toe, than if you were made of wood, and couldn't understand or feel.

It was wonderful how soon I began to pick up the meaning of words, and so did Miss Kate; but then Sir Rupert helped her, for French came as natural to him as English, which I think accounted for much of his wickedness.

And we had so much shopping to do, that I got to know heaps and heaps of expressions, and even could put sentences together so that the poor uneducated things who didn't know English were able to understand me. Besides, the waiter at the hotel, Antoine, taught me a lot, and we got friendly together, until one day he wanted to kiss me, upon which I boxed his ears, and told him I was a married woman! Now, on knowing that, an Englishman would have begged pardon, and never said another word; but this French fellow, if you please, only said, as cool as possible:

"Oh, madame, but that makes it that you are the more attractive."

Dear me! I've just copied all that out of my old diary. How funny it seems to look back now and think of that time when I was young and pretty, and could have had a French lover had I chosen; just for all the world like the ladies of quality in the plays and novels, of which the French nation are so fond!

Well, thank Heaven, I wasn't of that sort, having been respectably brought up and educated, and attended Sunday-school and learnt my duty to my neighbour, so I sent Antoine to the right-about pretty quick, though he'd still kiss his hand to me and make those grimaces which all Frenchmen do when they think they are captivating you. And that hussy of a chambermaid caught him once or twice, and was so mad.

That old diary of mine tells me lots of things about that time in Paris.

Sir Rupert was really very kind, and let me go everywhere with Miss Kate, just as if I were her governess instead of her maid; and bought her lovely things to wear—much too good for school, I thought—but then of course it was all out of her own money. As for Miss Kate herself, she was just mad with delight, and thought Paris a perfect heaven, and I believe she imagined that the school she was going to, which was at Auteuil, would be a sort of Paradise; and, indeed, the two ladies who kept it—the "Demoiselles Laroche" was their name—were perfectly charming, and the

school was beautifully situated and had large grounds, and I think there were only about twenty young ladies there—mostly English—so it seemed as if she would be happy enough for three years. I was to remain on at the Court, and be maid to her when she came back.

The fortnight was drawing to a close. I felt very sorry at leaving my little mistress; sorry, too, at leaving the beautiful city, which looked its best and gayest in this early spring-time. I knew, of course, that it was not at all as it appeared on the surface, and that poverty, and misery, and shame, and horror, and vileness, and crime, lurked like shadows behind that outer glow and splendour. But how splendid it was on that surface! What a world of tumult, colour, laughter, change, riot, after the quiet Devon village I had left!

I have always loved the country best. There seems no rest, no peace, no space to breathe in or be glad in the great thronged cities. And for the poor and the workers it is terrible—always the dull toil in close workrooms and narrow streets, and nothing to gladden or beautify their lives; no gleam of the blue heavens; no space of grass and trees; no song of birds in the dawns; no fresh, sweet scents of flowers; no shade of wood and forest. Nothing of these to make the toil less wearisome, the burden lighter, the daily task less hard.

If any one looks at life and thinks of it at all, I am sure they must wonder why such hundreds and thousands of human beings are born into it only for suffering. It does not seem just or right. Clever people and religious people seem to have settled it to their satisfaction; but I don't think the starving and the suffering look on it quite in the same way. I doubt very much also whether if any great Bishop or Church dignitary had to step out of his palace and give up his income, and his carriages and servants, and such-like luxuries, he'd be inclined to talk about the sins of covetousness and the wickedness of giving in to temptation quite so glibly. Only the tempted know what temptation is; only the suffering know the weight of pain, the burden of existence.

We judge each other much too harshly, both rich and poor. I think it is because there is too little real human sympathy and human interest in humanity. Of course, I'm not clever enough to go into details and arguments; but if one sets oneself to think about these matters at all,

it's extraordinary how the thoughts come and where they lead one on to. I've got perfectly dazed sometimes, trying to puzzle things out, and the why and the wherefore of them all.

But I dare say I'm not the only person in the world who's done that.

I seem to have strayed away from my subject again. When I refer to the old diary, I find that I parted from Miss Kate very low-spirited; and no wonder, considering I had not only to leave her, but face that horrible journey and voyage all by myself. However, the going back was not quite so bad, for the sea was smooth, and my few words of French helped me a bit; and once on British soil again, I felt as if I had really seen something to be proud of, and had enough to tell my fellow-servants for months to come.

And indeed they kept me at it, for 'twas a dull enough life at the Court, and some of them had never left Devon in their lives, and couldn't hear enough about the great French city, and the voyage, and the "Mounseers," and how they dressed, and the strange things they ate and did. So I was quite a person of consequence for a time.

Tom was very glad to see me, and vowed he had never so much as looked at the girl at the "Dayrell Arms," which I was quite foolish and loving enough to believe. I shouldn't do so now. In fact, I don't hold with men at all; they're all more or less bad; if it's not before marriage, it's after, and women are great fools to believe in them.

As long as they're sweethearts, it's all right, of course; but once let them get hold of us, and know we're their own property, and 'tis quite another thing. I've had a pretty good experience, and am only saying what I know.

If life hasn't been over and above kind to me, it's at least taught me some truths that other women will be the better of knowing, and I'm not going to hold them back.

But as this part of my story is only preliminary to what came after, I must begin to hurry on.

Miss Kate wrote to me often from school, and seemed very happy there. Now and then in the holidays Sir Rupert would go to see her, or take her to different foreign places, and, from her accounts, she was always beautifully dressed, and always seemed to have lots of admirers.

I didn't much like her mixing with all

those foreign folk, and was always afraid she might fall in love with one; and I thought Sir Rupert was a very careless guardian, considering how pretty she was, and how rich she might be. However, it wasn't my place to say anything. I could only stay there and wait for her to come home again, and hope that the three years had not altered what was good, and loving, and warm-hearted in the child I had nursed and brought up.

SOME THEATRICAL REMINISCENCES.

MY first visit to a London theatre dates as far back as 1826, in which year I heard Pasta—then in her prime—and Curioni in Mayr's "Medea in Corinto." I had previously, when quite a child, enjoyed the privilege of witnessing a performance of the "School for Scandal" at Cheltenham, organised for the benefit of a local charity, and supported almost exclusively by amateurs, the sole exception being the Lady Teazle of the charming Maria Foote. It was owing to the good-natured intercession of Colonel Berkeley, afterwards Lord Fitzhardinge, an intimate friend of my father, that I was permitted to "sit up" for the occasion; he himself playing Charles Surface, and his brother Grantley, well known as a sporting writer, Joseph. I have been told—my own recollections of the eventful night being necessarily of the haziest—that the Colonel was considered to be one of the best non-professional actors of his time in England, and that this was nearly his last appearance on the stage; however this may be, I never saw him on it again, but had frequent opportunities subsequently of admiring his fair coadjutress in several of her leading characters, and notably in Letitia Hardy, and Maria Darlington.

Even before my schoolboy days, I had already stored up ineffaceable memories of Edmund Kean and his excellent fellow-tragedian, Young; had revelled—oh, how heartily!—in the drollery of the inimitable Paul Pry; and, as a matter of course, had fallen desperately in love with the siren Vestris; and in every succeeding year, whether temporarily liberated from the thralldom of the terrible Pinckney at East Sheen, or from the far less onerous discipline of Eton, I never missed a chance of enlarging my experiences of

the London stage. I well remember, among many other celebrities, Charles Kemble, Fawcett, and Maria Tree in the "Merry Monarch"; James Wallack in the "Brigand"; Farren and the pretty Miss Love in "Charles the Twelfth"; the rival vocalists, Miss Paton and Kitty Stephens; Henry Phillips and Miss Romer in the "Mountain Sylph"; Fanny Kemble in "Isabella"; Mrs. Yates and "glorious" John Reeve in "Victorine," and the "Wreck Ashore"; O. Smith and Keeley in the "Bottle Imp"; Planché's early extravaganzas at the Olympic; and the début of Charles Mathews in the "Hump-backed Lover," and the "Old and Young Stager." Nor must I forget Joe Grimaldi, whom I only saw once; Bologna, Barnes, and Ellar in pantomime; and the two great triumphs of Cartlitch and Gomersal at Astley's—"Mazeppa," and the "Battle of Waterloo."

In 1837 I left England for the Continent, and from that time my theatrical experiences—barring occasional flying visits to London—were for a long period almost entirely Parisian, my stay in the "gay city" having exceeded twenty-five years. During this protracted sojourn I may safely assert that few of its inhabitants, native or exotic, were more indefatigable playgoers than myself; from the Opéra and the Comédie Française, down to Bobino and the Petit Lazari, each of the twenty-two theatres then existing in Paris and its suburbs was more or less familiar to me—in most cases not as a mere casual visitor, but as a constant habitué. It may, however, be premised that amusement was a secondary consideration, as I had a special object in view; being then engaged on a work published in 1846 under the title of the "Theatres of Paris," a thorough acquaintance with the different repertoires, as well as something more than a superficial knowledge of the actors who played in them, was indispensable. Whether I partially succeeded in my task or not is now a matter of little moment; very few of the artists described still survive, and the book itself, having been out of print for many years, is probably almost forgotten.

This "labour of love," however—for such in truth it was—had one agreeable result, inasmuch as my researches necessarily brought me into contact with the most eminent dramatic notabilities of the time, including others who had long since retired from the stage. To many of these

I was indebted for anecdotal reminiscences, and hitherto unpublished personal details; and it is a real pleasure of memory in my old age to record, among those who kindly exerted themselves in my behalf, such world-wide celebrities as Regnier, of the Comédie Française; Bocage, the original Buridan of the "Tour de Neale"; Roger, the "Prophète" of the opera; Mademoiselle Rachel; Madame Stoltz, the Léonore of "La Favorite"; Mademoiselle Rose Chéri; and Madame Doche.

In later years I made the acquaintance of Perlet, whose Parisian career had been summarily closed owing to his refusal to exchange his position at the Gymnase for an engagement at the Théâtre Français, and who, in virtue of a regulation then in force, but now happily fallen into disuse, was forbidden to exercise his profession within twenty leagues of Paris. After long years of provincial "starring," he had finally settled down in a modest "entresol" of the Rue Geoffroy-Marie, where, although considerably past the meridian of life, he devoted himself to an exhaustive study of his art, and published a remarkable essay on the influence of the drama on the manners of the day. He was tall in stature, and as thin as a lath, but, despite his age, as upright as a grenadier. His memory was a perfect storehouse of anecdote, and when "i' th' vein," he would delight his hearers with graphic reminiscences of Talma, Mademoiselle Duchesnois, and other great artists of his youth, generally winding up with a scathing criticism of the modern stage, and especially of his "bête noire," Mademoiselle Rachel.

A very different type was Arnal, the quaintest of humourists on the boards, and in private life the gravest and most reserved of men. He rather shunned than courted the society of his colleagues, and was consequently no favourite with them. Contrary to the usual custom of actors when off duty, he was never seen in any theatre but his own; and even there he seldom, if ever, appeared in the green-room. Once on the stage, however, the metamorphosis was complete; he was no longer the serious, misanthropic recluse, but the joyous interpreter of the quips and cranks of his habitual purveyors, Davert and Lauzanne, the effect of which on the risible muscles of the audience was irresistible. He never, under any circumstances, lost his presence of mind, but had always his wits about him; and I remember

a case in point. One evening at the Vaudeville the spectators were suddenly startled by a false alarm of fire, and a general confusion prevailed. The occupants of the pit and stalls with one accord made for the doors, and in another minute the theatre would have been entirely deserted, when Arnal, who happened to be on the stage, came forward, and coolly enquired what was the matter. Shouts of "Fire! fire!" greeted him on every side, and the stampede continued until the actor, who had meanwhile ascertained by a reassuring gesture from the stage-manager behind the scenes that the report was unfounded, assumed an indignant air, and exclaimed with a comic energy which at once arrested the panic:

"Ah çà, Messieurs, do you suppose, if there were the slightest danger, that I should be such an idiot as to stop here?"

That nervous, fidgety little being, Bouffé, the most versatile and finished comedian of his time, shortly after his engagement by Nestor Roqueplan at the Variétés, came into the "foyer" one evening, and related to us a visit he had paid that afternoon to Alexandre Dumas, who had promised him an excellent part in a piece called "Le Garde Forestier."

"In the course of conversation," said Bouffé, "he explained to me his system of composition, which is simple enough. 'When I have nothing better to do,' he said, 'I buy a franc's worth of paper, and write a play or a novel, as the case may be. Whether it succeed or fail, I run no risk, for I can only lose my outlay of one franc. On the other hand, how many people, counting actors, musicians, scene-painters, costumiers, and printers, do you suppose I give employment to? Two hundred at the very least; and, if every one did as much, we should have less misery and fewer revolutions.'"

That worthy chip of an old block, Dumas the younger, has inherited no small share of the paternal gift of repartee. Many years ago, when the pair were travelling in Spain, they came to a part of the country said to be infested by brigands.

"What idiots we were," exclaimed Dumas fils, "to forget our pistols!"

"You might as well speak in the singular number," quietly suggested his father.

"True," replied the son, with a smile, "I stand corrected. I ought to have said, what an idiot you were to forget them!"

Does any one now remember among the

thousand and one men of letters perpetually springing up in Paris like mushrooms, that singular type of self-conceit and placid assurance, André de Goy? To hear him dilate on his visionary projects—each of which was to be an infallible stepping-stone to celebrity—you would have supposed yourself listening, not to a writer ambitious of distinction, but to one who had already attained it; whereas, in reality, he might have been compared to the train described by Mr. Burnand in his analysis of "Bradshaw," which "always starts but never arrives." His illusory hopes, invariably magnified into certainties, were alluded to with an air of such profound conviction that even those who knew him best were occasionally taken in. His literary baggage was small, chiefly consisting of translations from Dickens and Ainsworth, and adaptations of "Money" and the "Battle of Life," both failures; the only successful effort of his pen being "Monsieur va au Cercle," a one-act farce played at the Palais Royal, which had a fair run, and his exultation consequently knew no bounds.

"Write for the stage, mon bon," he said to one of his intimates, "if you want to make your fortune. Follow my example, and the money will come in faster than you can count it. What do you suppose my piece has already brought me in?"

"Why," replied his friend, "as it has been acted pretty often here and in the country, perhaps four or five thousand francs."

"Misère!" exclaimed André. "Say thirty thousand, and you will be nearer the mark."

Another characteristic anecdote is related as follows, by Aurélien Scholl:

"I met de Goy one evening on the Boulevard.

"The Café Anglais," he said, "is rather dear. I have just dined there, and handed a five hundred franc note to the waiter."

"Five hundred francs for one person!" I exclaimed. "Impossible!"

"A fact, my dear fellow. I believe he gave me back some change; but really I don't know how much."

"Perhaps four hundred and ninety francs," I suggested.

"Something like that," coolly replied de Goy."

Ponchielli, the popular composer of "La Gioconda," according to an informant, who knew him well, was as deplorably afflicted with absence of mind as the poet Bowles

and the provincial manager Thornton. Examples of the maestro's infirmity—genuine or apocryphal—might be cited ad infinitum. The following, however, may, I believe, be relied on as strictly authentic.

He was staying with Ricordi, at Milan, when a visitor was announced, and Ponchielli, who was still in his travelling costume, retired to his room for the purpose of changing his dress; but came back in a minute or two with a bewildered air.

"What is the matter?" enquired his host.

"I can't make it out," replied the other. "I have searched my trunk from top to bottom, and can find nothing in it but a heap of music."

Next day the mystery was solved by the arrival of a letter from a publisher at Florence, complaining that instead of the music Ponchielli had promised to send him, he had received a box full of clothes.

On the first performance of an opera at Venice, the composer was called for at the close; whereupon Ponchielli, who happened to be behind the scenes, imagining that one of his own works had been played, went on the stage in compliance with the summons, and to the stupefaction and infinite amusement of the audience, gravely bowed his acknowledgements.

The well-known dramatist, Palgrave Simpson, who died after a long and painful illness, on the nineteenth of August, 1887, was an old and valued friend of mine. I first met him in Paris towards the end of 1843, at which period I was engaged in translating the *Vicomte d'Arincourt's* work, "The Three Kingdoms," published by Mr. Bentley in the ensuing year. Being anxious that the French and English versions of the book should appear simultaneously, d'Arincourt was insatiable in his demands for "copy;" and it was finally settled that the latter half of the second volume should be handed over to Palgrave, who, with the aid of a Scotchman then residing in Paris, managed to complete the task in time. Soon after, my new acquaintance removed his household gods to London; and, although we frequently corresponded, I almost entirely lost sight of him until my return to England in 1870. Since then, a month rarely elapsed without my visiting him in his Brompton home; and up to a few days before his death I constantly passed my Sunday afternoon in listening to his experiences of literary and theatrical life. He told me that his first attempt as an author was a story for

"Blackwood," for which he received twenty-five guineas; he subsequently tried his hand, with fair success, at novel-writing, and ultimately became one of the most prolific dramatists of his time. At a rough computation he must have written at least seventy or eighty pieces, a few of which, and notably "A Scrap of Paper," a clever adaptation of Sardou's "Pattes de Mouche," still keep the stage.

One of his earliest productions was "Poor Cousin Walter," the principal character in which had been designed by him for Leigh Murray, a young actor he had remarked at the Strand Theatre. When it was finished, he took the manuscript to the "jeune premier's" house, and left it in charge of the latter's wife, her husband being then ill in bed; she looked at him, however, so curiously, and had evidently such difficulty in maintaining her gravity, that, unable to account for this singular reception, he naturally felt offended, and went away in a huff. Next day a cab stopped at his door, the occupant of which was no other than the actor himself, announcing that he liked the piece, and would read it to Farren (at that time the manager of the Strand). "And now," continued Leigh Murray, "I must thank you for probably saving my life. I should tell you that my wife and I have often noticed you passing through our street, and as you wear a beard—rather an unusual ornament nowadays—we christened you 'the brigand;' and once, seeing you in the act of bestowing largesse on a crossing-sweeper, we added to it the epithet 'benevolent.' When you came to our house yesterday, my wife could hardly keep her countenance, which must have seemed to you very rude; and after you were gone, she ran up to my room, where I was suffering horribly from a quinsy, showed me the manuscript, and told me to guess who had brought it. I named Bayle Bernard, Maddison Morton, and two or three more, but she shook her head, and at last screamed out, 'What do you say to the benevolent brigand?' This so tickled me that I burst into a fit of laughter, and broke my quinsy; so that, thanks to you, I am now all right again!"

Since the above was written, I have seen a somewhat similar version of this anecdote in Mr. Coleman's "Players and Playwrights I have known." But, as Palgrave was in the habit of relating stories of his past life whenever he found a listener, I venture to leave this as it stands.

Palgrave Simpson once told me an anecdote of Julia Bennett, one of the most popular members of the Haymarket company under Webster's management. She married a diamond merchant named Barrow, and came one morning to rehearsal in a smartly-appointed brougham.

"Look at Julia's new carriage," exclaimed a young actress standing at the window; "isn't she a lucky woman?"

"Don't be too sure of that, my dear," said Mrs. Glover. "Julia keeps her brougham now; but, for all we know, she may, perhaps, one day have to keep her Barrow!"

As it turned out, the words were prophetic; for the diamond merchant ultimately lost his fortune, and but for his talented wife's salary, would, probably, have found himself in the position of the gentleman described in "L'Homme Blasé," who "non-seulement n'avait pas de foin dans ses bottes, mais n'avait même pas de bottes pour y mettre le foin!"

As far as the theatre was concerned, my good friend was certainly no "laudator temporis acti"; an over-indulgent appreciator of the modern drama and its interpreters, he was persistently sceptical as to the merits of bygone celebrities; doubted the supremacy of Garrick, and declined altogether to believe in the traditional super-excellence of Mrs. Siddons. Of John Kemble he had a personal, and by no means agreeable, recollection.

"When I was very young," he said, "my father, a great admirer of the classical school, took me to see him in 'Hamlet,' at Norwich (my birthplace), and after the play asked me how I liked him. 'Not at all,' I replied. 'He talked so slowly, and stopped so long between every word, that I was half asleep before he had done.'"

"What did your father say to that?" I enquired.

"He boxed my ears, and told me I was a fool. But, for all that, I know I was right."

I cannot guarantee that the following anecdote has never before appeared in print; but it is good enough to bear repeating.

"Passing through Leicester Square one morning," said Palgrave, "I met Balfe, who stopped and asked me, point-blank, if I would write him a libretto for an opera, saying that he could not stand Bunn's eternal twaddle any longer, and wanted a 'book' very badly. I thought it over for a minute or two, and finally consented.

"'Bravo!' he cried, 'we shall get on famously together; you are just the man to suit me, for, at all events, old fellow, you've no infernal poetry in you!'

"I never could quite make up my mind," added Palgrave, "whether I ought to take that as a compliment or the reverse!"

ON THE BEST PERIOD OF LIFE.

ONE day in early summer, when we were moving with delightful speed between the blue of the heavens and the blue of the Atlantic, our talk fell into an argument about the comparative worth to a man of the different epochs of his life: assuming, of course, that our typical man was an average man; neither a hectic genius whose vitality is all concentrated in one furious lustre of his years, nor a judicious drone whose thoughts and actions at three-score and ten vary hardly an iota from his thoughts and actions at five-and-twenty.

My friend was a man in what is currently called the prime of life; that is, he was about forty-two. But he had received a mortal blow from the angel Azrael, and he knew that his days were numbered. He had been wintering in a Southern island, among sunshine and gentle zephyrs. This had done him but little temporary good, and had not lengthened the interval which the doctors told him was as much as he could expect on this side the grave. He was hurrying home, therefore, anxious as a youth to be once more amid his paternal acres, and surrounded by faces as familiar and friendly as his own elms and oaks.

His disease was not of a kind to impair his judgement in a matter such as this. Nor was he an ungenerous man, disposed to carp at his fellow-men. He had lived thoroughly, in an honest sense of the word, from his twentieth year, gathering in good store of experience among men of various kinds, and journeying in different parts of the world. Thus the knowledge that time had enabled him to collect in the wallet of his mind was of no worthless or restricted class.

Now, had my friend been a mere sentimentalist, and a person prone to take his ideas from sentimental literature, he would of course have said downright that no epoch of life is half so enjoyable as early youth. Lord Byron's puling note has

echoed much too far into the century. Doubtless, before Byron's time, men have bewailed their boyhood, and wished themselves again under the sway of a birch-rod and short commons. But surely such a wish has never been strong testimony of worth in the wisher. It is all very well to sing once in a way:

Ye scenes of my childhood, whose loved recollection

Embitters the present, compared with the past.

But the mood passes; and the poet ought to regret having perpetuated in print a fancy as fleeting as the shadows of sunset. The chances are, however, that the songster in such a case is no fair mouthpiece for the community whose ideas he, with his superior gift of vocalisation, is supposed to enunciate. He is either sick at heart, or bodily broken, or the victim of some misfortune peculiar to himself. Nevertheless he presumes in his verse to speak for all the world, and to tell you and me—who, thank Heaven, know vastly better—that we are very wretched beings, and that we were happier far when we had no wills of our own, but little pocket-money, a weight of Latin and Greek verbs for ever pressing upon our brains, not one faculty in ten of those given us by Nature brought even to the first stage of its fruition, and, in short, nothing in the world to boast of except high spirits. High spirits, forsooth! As if the little woodland bird, newly caught on a villainous limed twig, and thrust into a cage of six-inch dimensions, were likely to find its high spirits, under such circumstances, a blessing! "Kill me or tame me quick!" the poor little warbler cut short in life might with more reason exclaim. And so with the boy in the like case.

In fact, both of us, as we leaned our chairs hard against the bulwarks, to see the snowy outgush of foam from the sides of the ship, agreed to condemn early youth outright. It is but a rudderless rushing here and there in chase of will-o'-the-wisp. Even the very friendships with which it is associated are no credit to it. They are the work of the after-time. Discreeter age tries the many in its scales, rejects nearly all, and retains but few. These few are due to chance, and a subtle sort of human affinity, rather than to merit in the youth himself. It is, if you like, the dumb yearning forth of the spirit in its embryonic, its caged period of existence. Indeed, there is no little in common between two friends whose intimacy dates

from boyhood, and a couple of ancient mariners who have been shipwrecked on divers disagreeable rocks, and have suffered all the picturesque privations and positive hardships that ought to attend a thorough-paced shipwreck. In each case, it is largely a fellowship of woe.

Turn the page upon early youth, then; nor give it a chance of the prize in this contest.

"I am inclined to think," said my friend, "that from twenty-one to twenty-five might be the best years of life."

Upon one condition only that seems possible. The condition is, that the man be in bonds of noble servitude of admiration to a noble woman. There will be much of disquiet attendant upon such a service; but it will be the restlessness of sure and certain growth, and growth in the highest direction. Ah! but the woman must be of exalted mould—little short, indeed, of a divinity. Otherwise, it were diabolical. The Greeks had more than an inkling of this method, although, as a rule, they could not rear such high-souled women as it is the privilege of modern Europe to excel in. With them the philosophers played the part of the woman. Often they played it detestably, but not always. The rare exceptions were those unsexed men who had attained to the state of pure contemplative spirits, to whom the world is but the shadow of a world. They made Greece. Similarly, the woman of our age who, from the most unselfish motives, devotes herself to others—whether to individuals, or classes, or entire nations—has in her the power to make the man in his early manhood. This is well known; but it is worth iteration. If only we could keep colleges of tried women for the finishing of the education of our boys! I warrant the result would be astounding. Tutors and the grand tour are now somewhat obsolete. In the nineteenth century they are almost childish finials to a man's intellectual development. The pupil nowadays has shot big game out West during his vacations, ere the tutor in pickle for him has finished his own stupendous education. But if only we could have these colleges of women, the tutor would be needed neither in theory nor practice. Alas! it is a dream, and likely to remain as unsubstantial as a dream.

This condition unfulfilled, the age from twenty-one to twenty-five falls from the pre-eminence. Even as to the boy life seems aimless, so to the man at this age

life is only too full of aims. Passions and aspirations deafen him with their incessant pleading for satisfaction. He has no peace. No sooner has he conciliated one of his petitioners than another, more merciless in its demands, and more persistent, dogs him like his own shadow, and haunts him even in his dreams. "Life's enchanted cup" comes very near being an infernal poison, in the complexity of its brewing. Who shall guide the novice through the hurly-burly? Ah, unless the guide himself be guided also, it will probably even then be but a leading of the blind by the blind. It was bad enough of old; but in these days, with our multifarious interests, and passions as numerous as interests, a young man may grow old ere he has gone sedately through the programme of "experience" which the dear obsequious old Dame Fashion, with a humble smirk, presents to him upon her bended knee.

What effect has this riot of guides and petitioners upon the much-enduring youth who is their prey? Well, unless he be heroic, it cannot but be prejudicial to his better self. He is driven to put himself upon a pedestal, and, more or less, join in the adoration which he fancies the rest of the world bestows upon him—with sufficient justification, indeed, he imagines. Down to the depths goes Modesty, with all her graces.

"A pretty creature, that, to want to fasten upon me," remarks the youth, as he sees her depart; "but I reckon she won't trouble me again." It is little likely that she will; and between ourselves, dear reader, the more is the pity.

This stage in the mutation of our hero brings us point-blank upon one other influence which might have done as much for him as the fascination of a noble woman. But now he has stepped out of its magic circle. He is of the outer, not the inner ring; and it will be odd if ever he get among the happy ones again. Since he has learnt to love himself, Love the magician has lost her power over him. Under the sway of a genuine, all-absorbing, worthy, and inspiring passion for a woman of his own age or less, he might have lived in Elysium. Then, indeed, his time of life were the most felicitous possible for him. And if he could prolong his enthusiasm and his courtship throughout the entire term, he might almost be said to have exhausted the possibilities of human happiness. But

such rapture is not for him, as a rule. And so his early manhood has to find what pleasure it may in excitement, as a substitute for happiness, and in constant change, instead of the smiling contentment of tranquillity.

Next, take full manhood—from twenty-five to forty. Of course, not every man is a full man at twenty-five. On the other hand, at forty some men have achieved more than others. It is an average estimate, that is all.

My friend here was in no doubt of his opinion. "Hang out the banners" on this glorious era of a man's life! The earlier stage might have been the best; this later one holds as much certainty as that held doubt. "Why, the very consciousness of physical strength, sustained strength, is a joy beyond price." Upon this argument I fear he laid too much stress, even as the pauper is inclined to think nothing of a Paradise in which he might not play the part of Dives. Again: "The judgement is now at its keenest, out of question. The highest intellectual work is now done, or never. I will go further and say, that even the graces of men and women are now more winning than at any other time. A face may have lost its first freshness, but it has also lost the insipidity which only too often accompanies juvenile beauty. The 'tone' has come."

We debated over this claimant for a while. I was indisposed to be so enthusiastic as my companion. We were both biassed; he by his sickness, and I by my ignorance. But the balance swung his way in the end. It seemed so assuredly better to be at work than about to begin to work; to have taken the plunge in all the other serious departments of a man's career, and breast the more formidable of the waves of circumstance; to have tethered oneself by this faculty and that to a number of interests which cheer at the same time that they educate; to have accepted this or that theory of life and the world as a sound and satisfying basis upon which to build up hopes for oneself, and for those sweet doubles of oneself which, at this stage, blossom around one like rose-trees in June. It is the time to breathe fully, and to enjoy the consciousness that each inspiration is full and vigorous.

All this is obvious, and yet I was glad to have it recalled to my mind. However, for my part, I was still inclined to think that old age, or young old age presses the time of manhood somewhat closely in the

race for excellence. It is all the difference between being a spectator and an actor. The old have been actors; they have also the pleasure of remembering it. They are, moreover, spectators of the actions of others in whom they may, or may not, be personally interested. Their arena of entertainment is therefore certainly the largest.

The old are also notoriously strong in matters of judgement, even though their knees may be weak. What so pleasurable as to sit in the seat of the censor? Is a man ever too old for the bench? The longevity and the haleness of our more considerable lawyers is a convincing testimony to the advantageousness of their position. But every old man stands towards the community at large like a judge towards his criminals. Each year broadens his horizon, extends his pleasure and his pastime. Methuselah was a man immensely to be envied. What varied lore, what an endless series of graduated pictures he must have stored within him, as the centuries passed and left him high and dry among his pigmy fellow-men!

But nothing is easier, it may be said, than to cast together the evils which commonly wait upon old age, and thereby to prove that it is absurd to suppose that happiness can exist in the midst of them. Of course nothing is easier than to catalogue these possible afflictions; but, on the other hand, I contend with my betters, that happiness, contentment, or what you please to call the "summum bonum" we all strive for, is quite independent of most of these afflictions. The prudent person, when old, expects to be tried in this way. He is prepared, and that is half the battle. Nor must it be forgotten that even as his energies have waned with his increase of years, so also his body has changed into a condition well suited to bear physical trials which, in his youth, would have been insufferable. As a stripling he grumbled without ceasing when a toothache or a sprained ankle kept him within doors; as an octogenarian, the chair to which he is confined for a good many hours of the day, is to him by far the most comfortable place in all the world; nor would he exchange it for the Pope's throne, if the throne were only to be won by a journey to Rome.

But to recur to the moral aspect of the matter. Is it not a fact that a good man's goodness increases as he grows older? There is nothing in the world more

venerable and loveable than a good old man or woman. Surely that is much, for are not respect and affection just the two things for which we fight hardest during the fighting part of our career? And they may be acquired by the aged without effort!

"It is only older people, after all, who are quite unselfish, and feel the greatest pleasure in witnessing the happiness of others."

Miss Thackeray was very right when she wrote this. It constitutes the keenest joy of reverend old age: a joy to which the wild intoxicants, which in youth we call pleasures, are as nothing at all. It is almost impossible, made as we are, for the young to be disinterestedly happy in the happiness of others. Envy and jealousy are ever on the alert to mar such a divine possibility. But the old are doubly gladdened by the visible joy of others. They are generous enough to rejoice because others are profited. And—this is not cynicism—they often also find cause to congratulate themselves that their own snug tranquillity is not in peril of being disturbed by the like boisterous agents of felicity.

It is for their peace and resignation that I most admire the old. They have attained Nirvana. The world's game, confessedly not an unamusing one, is known to them. They are on the heights of Pisgah, whereas we are warring in the plain, or groaning in the valleys about the tedium of our days. The very features of life which weary us, delight them. What to us is but a roar

... of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing . . .

is to them a symphony they never tire of hearing. The routine of life maddens us:

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time.

They love each new day to be the precursor of the one that follows it, and the same as that it has come after. Passion is as dead within them as ambition. Even their antipathies grow daily less antipathetic. Death, whom one would suppose they regarded as their most bitter foe—feeling towards him like the ailing lamb towards the eagle hovering above—comes at length to be viewed by them as a friend. He has, indeed, made intimate acquaintance with so many of their contemporaries, that they may consider themselves on bowing terms with

him. It no longer troubles them very deeply to hear that such another of their friends has been "called away in the night." It is little more than the postman's knock next door. Maybe the knock will sound at their own doors ere they have begun to lament.

LONDON MONKERIES.

WHITEFRIARS, Greyfriars, Austinfriars, the Broad Sanctuary—London is full even now of reminders that it once was, in the mediæval sense, a most religious city, as befitted the capital of that nation which, some one says, "was the very paradise of monachism." Of London monkeries the West Minster was as old a foundation as any. Thorney Island, in the days of King Lucius, was a pleasant place; the Romans had built a temple there which Lucius had turned into a church. But when the heathen came in, amid "the vehement prancings of the wild white horse," much culture disappeared in many parts, and Thorney, amongst others, came to be as wild and wretched a spot as "The Five Fields," from Ebury Street to the river, were when I was a boy. But in 610, Sebert of Essex was baptized by Mellitus, Bishop of London, and built a grand church on the island; and while he doubted to what Saint to dedicate it, lo! there appeared to Edric, the fisherman, a vision.

A light shone on the Surrey shore, and when he made for it a venerable man bade him ferry him to the island. Landing there the stranger went to the church, and straightway a host of angels came down and formed a procession, holding candles, while he went through the form of consecration. This being finished he bade Edric tell Mellitus that the church was already consecrated to Peter the fisherman, and that by Peter himself; and, moreover, he counselled Edric not to fish on Sundays, and never to fail in paying to the Abbey the tithe of what he caught.

Next day Mellitus came with his following, and, led by Edric, saw the crosses marked with holy chrism on the doors and also the droppings of the angels' candles. Wherefore, marvelling greatly, he abstained from consecrating; and in memory of this miracle the tithe of Thames fish was paid to the Abbey for well-nigh eight hundred years; indeed, in 1230, the monks went to law with the Parson of Rother-

hithe for the tithe of salmon caught in his parish, alleging that Saint Peter himself had granted it to them. Of course the Danes destroyed Sebert's Abbey and his Palace hard by; what Abbey did they not destroy? And Eadgar rebuilt it in 958, as he rebuilt many others, only that it might be again destroyed by the same invaders. But a century later Edward the Confessor reared a splendid pile, hallowed to his mind by a vision of the Lord Himself, and by the grace vouchsafed to him, poor sinful King, that the Irish cripple whom he had taken on his shoulders at the roadside and had carried through the church and laid on the altar, received perfect soundness even as Peter had told him that he should. Edward, too, while in exile in Normandy had vowed to go on pilgrimage to Rome if ever he should be restored to his country. But when his nobles suffered him not, the Pope absolved him of his vow on condition of his adding an Abbey of Benedictines to the splendid church which he had already reared in Thorney. The Benedictines were the learned order; and it was meet that in their sacristy should have been set up the press of Caxton. What manner of church the Confessor's was is shown us on the Bayeux tapestry. They say it covered as much ground as the present Abbey, and was the first cross-formed church ever reared in England. Almost every successive King enriched it. Its boundaries stretched from York House (that is, Whitehall) to Chelsea and Kensington. Saint Martin's, then truly in the fields, was one of its parishes. It held the manors of Paddington, Hendon, and Hampstead. The Nunneries of Kilburn and Clerkenwell belonged to it. When it was surrendered to Henry the Eighth its income was close upon four thousand pounds; that is, at least thirty thousand pounds nowadays. At the dissolution, its Abbot, Benson, had not the stern spirit of the good Abbot of Glastonbury—hanged on the Tor that rises hard by his monastery—or of Prior Houghton, of the Charterhouse, who, with several of his monks, was put to death for contumacy. He bent to the storm, and for his reward was made Dean of the College founded in lieu of the Monastery, and, two years after, became Bishop of the short-lived see of Westminster.

But Protector Somerset was a far worse enemy to the Church than King Henry. He determined that Somerset House, which he was building, should be the grandest

palace in England, and therefore he planned to pull down the Abbey and give the stone to his workmen. Happily he was bought off with the gift of fourteen good manors, and indemnified himself by using the stones of the great Clerkenwell Priory of the Knights of Saint John, not one stone of which—the glorious church, with its exquisitely-proportioned tower (renowned throughout the island), and its richly-carved side chapel—did he leave on another, save the gateway, which still stands.

We could not have afforded to lose the Abbey, though its central tower was never finished, and the western towers are Wren's stone-mason's Gothic. Indeed, much of the exterior was refaced by Wren, the flowing tracery being pared down and replaced by the petty mouldings which distress and astonish those who are struck—as every one is—with the grand loftiness of the interior.

Not many people know that the Abbey is, after a sort, a rival of Madame Tussaud's. Over Abbot Islip's chapel—note his rebus: an eye, and a hand holding a slip of a plant—is a chamber containing the wax-work figures that used to be carried in procession when any Royalty was buried.

Till Henry the Fifth's time, Kings and Queens had been carried to the grave with faces uncovered—as young girls are now carried in Italy—that their liege subjects might see the last of them. But Henry the Fifth died in France, and had to be “lap't in lead,” before he was brought over. Of him, therefore, an effigy was made, and, to accompany it, effigies of several of his predecessors. The custom was kept up; and Stow's list contains every King and Queen from Edward the Third to Anne of Denmark.

Up to 1840 this waxwork was a regular show, General Monk's cap being sent round when a party had finished looking at it, and the money divided among the minor Canons. To see it now you want a special order from the Dean. The older figures are in shocking order—I suppose they are past “restoring”—the wax having peeled off the wooden frames. One ghastly shape, wearing a crown, is supposed to represent Queen Philippa. Among those comparatively perfect is Queen Elizabeth, a frightful witch, with crown, ruff, jewelled stomacher, etc. This figure was carried from Whitehall at her funeral. Mary, wife of William the Third, is nearly six feet high. The face was from a plaster cast. Anne is as fat as

her sister, but shorter, with long, flowing hair, carrying the orb and sceptre; her mistress of the robes, the Duchess of Richmond, has her favourite parrot; Lord Nelson, added when his tomb in the rival church began to be an attraction, wears authentic garments, except the coat, the original of which is at Greenwich.

There were two other Abbeys in London. One of these was Grace Abbey, or Eastminster, founded in East Smithfield by Edward the First, for that severer branch of Benedictines, the Cistercians of Saint Bernard. At the suppression, its annual income was returned at about five hundred and fifty pounds, including the manors of Gravesend and Poplar, and many more. Not a trace of it is to be found nowadays; and very little remains of the Cluniac Abbey of Saint John of Bermondsey, founded by Alwine Child in 1082, and enriched, for a wonder, by that enemy of monks, William Rufus.

In this Abbey, Katherine of Valois, widow of Henry the Fifth, was imprisoned for her love passages with Owen Tudor; and there, too, Elizabeth Woodville was shut up by her son-in-law, Henry the Seventh. Being a foreign foundation, it was suppressed when the great effort was made to nationalise the Church under Edward the Third in 1371; but, being useful to Royalty, was refounded in 1399 and made into an Abbey, John of Attleborough being first Abbot. Its last Abbot, yielding like Benson of Westminster, received in exchange the Bishopric of Saint Asaph's. Sir John Pope, founder of Trinity College, Oxford, got a grant of the land and buildings (the income was four hundred and eighty pounds), including "Savory's Dock" and the Abbey mill.

But the neighbourhood was still fashionable; and out of the Abbey stones Ratcliff, Earl of Sussex, built a mansion on the same site. If you ever take a walk through Bermondsey, remember that "Grange Walk," "Long Walk," etc., are faint memories of the farm and gardens of this very Royal foundation.

A Prior was a smaller man than an Abbot. When the latter was "mitred"—as at Saint Alban's and Bury—he sat with the Bishops in the House of Lords. He had sometimes as many as six chaplains—the Prior had only one—called monitors, for they told him all that went on inside the walls. He could consecrate churches. He could stay away from refectory and from

church—having his own chapel—except on feast days.

Such a costly personage was only found in the largest monasteries, which, therefore, were Abbeys. Of Priors, London had at least seven, of which the oldest was Saint Bartholomew's. Prior Rahere—"a man of low kynage," says Stow, "yet pleasant-witted, who had been minstrel to Henry the First"—founded it about 1120. Rahere (or Rayer) got tired of his life, and went on pilgrimage to Rome. On his way thither he had a vision. A great beast, with wings like to a dragon, caught him and carried him to a place whence he could see the mouth of the Pit, and them that therein were in torments. From the beast's clutches he was saved by an old man of goodly presence, who said: "I am Bartholomew; and when thou art home again thou shalt build a church in my name on ground which I will show thee." "But I am only a poor man," urged Rayer, "with no land or living." "Fear not," replied the Saint; "what is needful shall not fail thee." And, in truth, no sooner did Rayer begin to build, than miracles—in those days very gainful—began to show themselves. Cripples walked away upright; blind men got their sight; a mass-book, stolen by a Jew, was discovered to a child by an angel; and when Rayer died in 1143 he had a fine foundation of thirteen monks.

Probably he got his land cheap; for the site is described as "right unclean—a marsh, duncy and fenny, with water ever abounding," not at all like what one looks for at the top of Snow Hill, not very far from that "Panier Alley," off Paternoster Row, which an inscription claims is "the highest ground in all the City round." Rahere still lies in stone, gilt and painted, as such effigies used to be, in the choir of the church that he built. At his foot stands a crowned angel, and on either side kneels a monk, with Bible opened at Isaiah li 3: "The Lord shall make thy wilderness like Eden." He did not set this up; it is rich fifteenth century work—look at its grand canopy. His church is Norman, of course, and very fine of its kind, far finer than the "Round Church" at the Temple. The treatment it has received is disgraceful. What is left is only the choir and a fragment of the nave; and one remembers the workshops built into the transepts, etc. In no other city in Europe would such a splendid remnant of old times have been left in such a state,

when it had a claim not only on the Corporation, but the rich hospital connected with it.

There was a big row in this church not much more than a century after it was built. Eleanor, wife of Henry the Third, was too partial to her countrymen of Provence. Her uncle, Boniface, whom her influence had made Archbishop, was haughty and ill-conditioned. Once when he was visiting Saint Bartholomew's, he thought the sub-Prior showed him too little reverence; whereupon he rushed at him, slapped his face, tore up his cope and trampled on it, and having armour under his vestments, squeezed him so hard against a pillar that he almost pressed the life out of him. The monks supported their sub-Prior, and the Smithfield folks getting an inkling of what was going on, poured in, overpowered the Archbishop's suite, and pursued them with yells and hooting to Lambeth. The church is full of interesting tombs, specially noteworthy being a grand one of Sir Walter Mildmay, Elizabeth's Chancellor, founder of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. The Queen accused him of founding a Puritan College—which, indeed, it proved to be. "No, madam," he replied. "I have but set an acorn, which, when it becomes an oak, God knows what will be the fruit thereof." Not far off is Doctor Antony (1623), inventor of the Aurum Potabile, a universal remedy, which made his fortune — as universal remedies still do. He lived in grand style in Bartholomew's Close, not far from the old gate, from a scaffolding over which the Lord Mayor, the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl of Bedford, and Wriothesley—the Chancellor who, with his own hands, had already tortured her on the rack—watched in 1546 the burning of Anne Askew. The hospital was part of Rahere's foundation, of which the yearly income at the suppression was over six hundred and fifty pounds.

Somewhat older than Rahere's Priory was that founded for Austin Canons regular (that is, living by a rule) by Queen Maud, Henry the First's wife. This was at Aldgate, just within the walls. It was the first suppressed of all our religious houses; perhaps Henry the Eighth had a special grudge against it, for the Pope had made it a "peculiar," free of all jurisdiction, even the King's. In 1531 it was granted to Speaker (afterwards Lord Chancellor) Sir Thomas Audley, who left not one stone on another of its glorious church, though among the monuments

were those of King Stephen's son and daughter. Aldgate Pump covers the holy well of Saint Michael, in whose chapel, belonging to the Priory, the well was. The crypt of the chapel still exists under the pavement. They say it is very beautiful; surely it might be taken up and rebuilt in some place where it might be seen. The glory of Aldgate Priory was its peal of nine bells; its Prior was always Alderman of Portsoken—the soken of the gate.

A few years earlier—in 1106—was refounded for the same order of Augustinian Canons the old Abbey of St. Mary Overie. Stow tells how Mary, a ferry-woman, long before London Bridge was built, stored up her earnings to build a house of Sisters. Swithun, when he set up a timber bridge, turned this into a college for secular Canons. Its refounders were two Norman knights, Dauncey and Pont de l'Arche; and their buildings being burned about 1207, Peter de Rupibus, Bishop of Winchester, rebuilt the whole with great splendour. It is his work which still remains in the beautiful Lady Chapel of what is now called St. Saviour's, Southwark. Among its many tombs, note the poet Gower's, and that of Dr. Lockyer the quack (temp. Charles the Second):

Till with all else at th' universal fire
This verse is lost, his *PILL* embalms him safe
To future times without an epitaph.

On Alderman Humble (1616) are Quarles's famous lines, beginning:

Like to the damask rose you see,
Or like the blossom on the tree.

Its income was about the same as that of Saint Bartholomew's; and a very small part of this was recovered in James the First's time to endow the parish school. The church had been already bought by the parish.

The Priory of the Knights of St. John, Clerkenwell, was founded by the same Baron de Brisset who founded Clerkenwell Nunnery. Heraclius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, consecrated the splendid church. Its yearly revenue was very nearly two thousand three hundred and ninety pounds; and (as I have said) Protector Somerset got hold of it, and (as usual) belied his title in his treatment of it. Bedlam, or Bethlehem in the Moor, was founded in 1246 for brethren and sisters by Sheriff Simon FitzMary. As it was outside Bishopsgate in the unhealthy Moor-fields, no one cared much for it. The City was allowed to buy, and the buildings were at once used for a mad-house. Monkwell Street keeps up

the memory of Elsing Priory, founded for Austin Canons in 1329, by Elsing, a mercer. At the dissolution the parishioners bought the church, St. Alphege's, the porch of which belongs to the original building. Its income at the suppression was less than two hundred pounds.

More important was the Charterhouse. It was founded in 1371 by Sir Walter Manny, of whom every boy has read in his Froissart, on a bit of waste called "No Man's Land," between the gardens of the Knights of Saint John and the lands of Saint Bartholomew's. This had been one of the burial-grounds during the Black Death, bought for the purpose and consecrated by Ralph of Strafford, Bishop of London. He built a chapel, and endowed perpetual masses for the fifty thousand who were buried in these three acres. It was the constancy of the Charterhouse monks and their Prior Houghton, which nerved Sir T. More to stand against Henry the Eighth. He had lived for some years in their community, though without taking vows; and when he watched them being taken to Tyburn: "Lo, dost not see, Meg?" he said to Mrs. Roper; "these blessed fathers be now as cheerfully going to their deaths as bridegrooms to their marriage." Besides those drawn and quartered, a batch of ten was starved to death in Newgate. At the suppression (the income being about six hundred and forty-two pounds) the Priory was given to Speaker Audley, and by him sold to North, who sold it to the Duke of Norfolk. He transformed it into a grand mansion, but by his son it was sold to Thomas Sutton, citizen and girdler, who had made a vast fortune in Northumberland coal. This first of successful coal merchants gave thirteen thousand pounds for it, and spent twenty thousand pounds in fitting it up for pensioners and scholars, endowing it besides with fifteen manors, yielding yearly four thousand five hundred pounds. Such a rich foundation was not allowed to pass unchallenged. James the First long refused letters patent; Bacon, though he wrote "The Advancement of Learning," backing him up as hard as he could; indeed, from 1611 to 1628, Sutton was uncertain whether what Fuller calls "the master-piece of English charity," would not be got hold of by the Crown. Washhouse or Poplar Court, and the cloisters, are parts of the old monastery.

But there is no space to go through half the London religious houses. The Friaries

have left their mark. Blackfriars had walls and gates of its own, and stretched from Mountfichet Tower to Baynard Castle, all which was out of the jurisdiction of the Mayor and Barons (Aldermen) of the City. Parliaments were held here; here was pronounced the divorce on Catherine; here lodged many lords and gentles all through Elizabeth's reign. Indeed, it would be curious to enquire how this big College for nobles, as the Dominican house had become, perished away. Greyfriars belonged to the Franciscans, another branch of the mediæval Salvation Army. Founded in the Shambles (the Franciscans always chose a poor, crowded part of a town) by mercer Ewin in 1225, it was much beautified by Margaret, wife of Edward the First. She was buried there, as well as other Queens and great people. The church was bought by the parish, but destroyed in the Fire. Crutched means crossed friars; they came over from Italy in 1244, and persuaded two citizens to house them in Hart Street by the Tower. Austinfriars, founded by Bohun, Earl of Hereford, in 1253, was the chosen burial-place of many noble families. When the Friary was granted to Paulet, Marquis of Winchester, the nave of the church was reserved, and, by Edward the Sixth, "given to the Dutch nation." Alas! the beautiful decorated windows that some of us remember are gone; it was burnt down a few years ago. Whitefriars belonged to the Carmelites, who claimed descent from Elijah and Elisha! Their sanctuary (afterwards called "Alsatia") held its privilege till 1697. The Friaries were poor. Monks could not hold personal property; but their monasteries might receive gifts. Friaries were bound to hold no more wealth than sufficed to maintain their members. Of Whitefriars, the income is given at twenty-six pounds; of Crutched Friars, fifty-two pounds; of Austin's, a few pounds more.

Of nunneries, besides that in Clerkenwell, as rich in architecture as its neighbour the Priory of Saint John, was the rich Abbey of poor Clares or Minorites, founded in 1293 by Edmund, Earl of Lancaster. From this the Minorites gets its name. Its income was over four hundred and eighteen pounds.

Nearly as valuable was St. Helen's Nunnery, in Bishopsgate; and there was another in Shoreditch dating from Richard the First.

London had, besides, divers colleges of

secular priests—ordinary clergy, not monks—Jesus College, close by Saint Laurence Poultney, founded by the Mayor of that name; Saint Mary's, on College Hill, founded by Whittington; Saint Martin's-le-Grand—so called because of its great sanctuary—it dated from 700 A.D.

Of guilds, too, there were many; among them Saint Katharine's—where are the Docks. The endowment gives some poor-rich ladies a pleasant home by the Regent's Park. This was founded by Stephen's wife, Matilda, and had within its precincts a sanctuary for apostate Jews. Its income was over three hundred and fifteen pounds.

Some of these guilds were boarding-houses, where one might live "in retreat" for a small payment yearly.

The Rolls' guild—now Rolls' Office—was for converted Jews; but was dissolved in 1377.

Knighten Guild, Aldgate, for knights tired of the world, dates from King Edgar.

Then there were hospitals: not only Bartholomew's, but Saint Thomas's, bought by the City from Henry at the suppression; Saint James's, for leprosy maids, where is now Saint James's Palace; the Savoy, richest of all, save Bartholomew's, built on the site of the Lancastrian Palace ruined by Wat Tyler. The Temple, too, was a hospital; and so was Saint Giles's-in-the-Fields (for lepers).

London, we see, was not behind other cities in the number and riches of its religious and semi-religious houses. It would be interesting to go more fully into detail, and to trace out especially the pre-Norman foundations. The Guildhall Library has books enough on the subject.

A PRODIGAL SON.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

ON a rough night, during the Christmas Vacation, the Temple does not look the cheeriest place in the world. Its windows are dark and sombre, its gardens bleak and leafless. The wind rushes shrieking through its deserted courts and up its gloomy staircases. There is no sign of life to be seen, save the form of an occasional policeman who stands shivering in some sheltered doorway; or of comfort, save the little fire over which nods the drowsy old night-porter.

But the Temple, like everything else, should not be judged by appearances.

Even on the roughest of nights, and during the dearest of vacations, there are plenty of snug little spots in it. The staircases leading to them may be cold and gloomy, but there is no want of warmth and light within. Their windows may be dark and sombre-looking, but that is because the shutters are close and the curtains thick. The wind may shriek as fiercely as it likes about their walls; it may hurl itself as often as it pleases against their doors and windows; it may, like the sturdy and unmannered tramp it is, try its strength and ingenuity by turns to force an entrance and steal away a part of their comfort; but, secure behind closed oaks and drawn curtains, their owners can laugh at its fruitless efforts, and enjoy untroubled the cheerfulness it cannot disturb.

Old Serjeant Stronge was the fortunate possessor of one of the snuggest of these snug sets. It was high up in King's Bench Walk. On one side its windows opened out towards the gardens, on the other they overlooked the river. In summer the situation was pleasant and picturesque; but in winter, when the trees, like huge, fantastic skeletons, rattled their leafless branches in the wind, and when one heard, away in the distance, the surge and splash of the black, cold river as it rolled on in darkness towards the sea, it was weird and solitary enough.

But old Serjeant Stronge, as he cared little for the beauty of his chambers' situation in the summer, cared little for its weirdness in the winter. When the north wind rattled against his windows, he only drew his curtains closer; when the river moaned gloomily between its banks, he only stirred up the blazing fire. He was a hard, matter-of-fact man, who paid small attention to anything but his creature comforts, his pleadings, and his fee-book.

On this December evening, though the wind screamed and the snow flew without, he enjoyed untroubled the comfort about him. He sat in his easy-chair, in the old wainscoted room, before a roaring fire. On the table stood a reading-lamp, which threw a soft light over the floor, and by it was a decanter of rare port, from which, from time to time, he helped himself. The curtains were warm, the fire was bright, the wine was good; why should he care what the weather was like?

Indeed, Serjeant Stronge was in a particularly satisfied frame of mind that night, and he had two very good reasons for his satisfaction. The first was, with

regard to Michaelmas Term, which that day had ended. He had just totted up his receipts for the term, and the result was all that he could desire. Never before had his fee-book for the Autumn sittings made so fair a show.

The second reason for his satisfaction was that, that night his son Charlie was to come to him. The Serjeant was a widower, and Charlie was his only child. The lad was at Oxford, and as the Christmas Vacation had commenced, his father was expecting him at chambers to spend his holidays with him.

As he closed his fee-book the old lawyer smiled to himself with satisfaction.

"Yes," he muttered, "that's excellent! Fifteen hundred guineas in about seven weeks—that's capital! My income this year is close upon seven thousand—not bad for a man who, thirty years ago, was worth exactly nothing at all. I'm getting rich now. I'm more successful than even I had ever hoped to be. Hillo! what's that?"

This exclamation was due to the noise produced by a tremendous burst of wind. Serjeant Stronge went to the window, drew aside the curtains, and looked out.

"Hum!" he said, as he turned back to the fire. "That's a bad night for Charlie's homecoming. Well, well, he's young, strong, and well cared for; it shouldn't do him harm. When I was his age, though my coat was thin enough, Heaven knows, I wouldn't have cared a rush for it." Then he paused and reflected in silence for a moment. "Mrs. Aldridge!" he then cried out.

The laundress came in.

"Have you Master Charlie's room ready?" he asked her.

"Yes, sir," replied the laundress.

"A blazing fire, sheets well aired, and all that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah, very well. I think you can go home now."

"Thank you, sir. Good night."

When the laundress had withdrawn, the old lawyer once more gave himself up to reflection.

"Yes," he said to himself, after a little pause, "it's just as well things are going well with me, or Charlie's demands would come rather heavy. Last year he spent plenty, in all conscience, but it was nothing to this year. Well, well, I suppose it can't be helped. When I sent him to Oxford, I told him to get into the best set there,

and he has done it, and living among them I suppose he must live like them."

Again the old lawyer relapsed into silence and reflection.

"Yes," he said again, after a long pause. "Yes, his intimacy with some of those young fellows should be of much service to him hereafter. Such friends as Lord Eustace Eustace, and the Hon. Fred Terrington, must be useful to a lad beginning life. Belonging to a good set at Oxford will bring him into a good set in London. What a start in life the boy has! Brought up at the best school and College in England, mixing as an equal with the sons of millionaires and noblemen, and backed by an income of thousands a year, what may he not aspire to! What might I not have been if I had had such a start! I began life without a shilling and without a friend, and here I am, at sixty, at the top of my profession, with a fortune saved and a seat in Parliament. What might I not have been if I had begun with education, position, and wealth to assist me! By heavens, I'd have been before this the first man in England!"

The Serjeant, in his excitement, rose to his feet and paced the room for some moments.

"Ah, well, well," he said, as he reseated himself, "if I was too heavily handicapped to win the highest honours, Charlie will do that for me. In his path there are none of the obstacles which impeded me. All is open before him; he has only to go in and win. I have borne the burden and heat of the day. Ay, he little knows how heavy that burden was; how I have toiled, and struggled, and hoped when everything seemed against me, until my brain ached and my heart grew sick. Ah! it's no easy task for a poor, unlettered, friendless man to conquer learning and fortune. But I did it—did it by labour, suffering, and self-denial—and now to him I look for my reward. It is his part to win for our name the rank and honours that age is coming to prevent my winning."

After this little oration, Serjeant Stronge once more gave himself up to silent reflection. He had continued silent and motionless for some time, when another terrific blast attracted his attention.

"Well, this is a wild night!" he muttered. "It is nearly time Charlie was here—time altogether," he added, as he looked at the great old clock in the corner. "I wish he had arrived. There's no danger, I know; but still one cannot help

feeling just a little uneasy on such a night as this. I wish the boy had arrived."

Serjeant Stronge rose to his feet, and began to pace the room restlessly. He was feeling a little anxious. The time at which his son was to arrive had come, and as yet there was no sign of him.

He continued pacing the room for some time. Again he looked at the clock; it was now considerably past the appointed hour; but still there was no sign of the boy's coming. Every moment the Serjeant's uneasiness was becoming greater.

"What can be detaining him?" he exclaimed, anxiously. "I wonder can anything have happened to him? He is not, as a rule, unpunctual, and to-night, as he knows I'm awaiting him, he would be more than usually particular to be in time. I can't understand it. I wish he were here."

Just then another terrific blast struck against the windows, and made them rattle wildly in their firm sashes. It sent a shiver through Serjeant Stronge's frame, and filled him with an indefinite feeling of apprehension.

"I wish to goodness I knew where he is!" he said, despondingly.

He had scarcely spoken when he heard a knock at the door.

"Thank Heaven," he muttered, in a relieved tone; "there he is at last."

Hurrying away he opened the door. When he did so he stepped back in surprise. The person at the door was not his son Charlie, but his nephew, Jack Whyte.

"Wny, Jack," the Serjeant exclaimed, angry at the disappointment, "what brings you here at this hour of the night?"

"Let me in, sir," answered Jack. "I have come about Charlie."

"About Charlie!" repeated the startled lawyer, turning very pale. "There's nothing wrong with him? He's not ill?"

"No, sir, he's not ill," replied Jack, uneasily. "Let me in, sir, and I'll tell you all about it."

Serjeant Stronge closed the door, and led the way into his cosy sitting-room. When Jack Whyte entered, he turned and faced him.

"Jack," he said, in a husky voice, "I see there is something wrong. What is it?"

Jack hesitated for a moment. He seemed half afraid to speak.

"Come, come, man," cried the old lawyer, angrily. "Out with it! Do you think I'm a woman or a child, that you can't trust yourself to tell me bad news?"

Don't keep me in suspense. Let me know the worst. Is Charlie dead?"

"No, no, sir," said Jack Whyte, hastily, "it's not that—it's quite different. It's—it's——" and again he hesitated.

"Well, if it's not that," cried the Serjeant, "what under heaven is it? For God's sake tell me what has happened."

"Well, sir, it's about a servant-girl at 'The Mitre,'" said Jack Whyte, still speaking in an embarrassed way. "He has written to me to break the news to you." And Jack paused.

"What is the news?" asked the Serjeant, with a fearful calmness.

"Well, sir," Jack stumbled on, "it seems, sir, that he and she were——" again he paused.

"Go on," said the Serjeant, now ghastly pale.

"Were to be married this morning!"

The old lawyer gazed at Jack Whyte for a moment in silence. Then he sank into his easy-chair and covered his face with his hands. Thus he sat in silence for what seemed to Jack Whyte hours. At length he spoke.

"My God!" he muttered, "and this is the reward for all my labour, and suffering, and self-denial!"

CHAPTER II.

A YEAR had elapsed, and the anniversary of that eventful night was arrived. It was as bitter and boisterous as its predecessor. The wind screamed fiercely through the deserted courts and desolate gardens of the Temple; the snow flew wildly about in scattered flakes; the moon's face was distorted by the angry clouds which swept continually across it. All Nature seemed to be venting a long pent-up wrath upon a sinful world. Heaven help those who had no shelter for their heads that night!

Again Mr. Serjeant Stronge sat alone in his old chambers in King's Bench Walk; again everything about him bespoke ease and luxury. The fire danced and sparkled on the hearth; the lamp shed its soft light over the carpeted floor; the heavy curtains hid every token of the cold and misery without. But Mr. Serjeant Stronge was no longer the self-satisfied, prosperous gentleman he was a year ago. Even as he sat there in the subdued light of the shaded lamp, one could have seen care, disappointment, and discontent in every line of his stern, worn face.

In his hand was a letter, which he had read and read again. It was from Charlie, his son, on whom he had looked with such pride, and from whom he had expected such great things, only a year ago.

"DEAR FATHER," it ran, "this is the anniversary of that morning when I committed the sin against you for which it seems there is no forgiveness. Since you then disowned me, the sorrow and suffering I have gone through no tongue can tell. My miseries have now reached a climax. Foodless myself for days, my hapless wife and innocent child are now languishing for want of bread. I cannot and will not bear it any longer.

"I do not ask for your forgiveness for myself—I know it would be useless to do so; but what I do ask and demand is, that you shall save my poor wife and child from starvation. If I cannot get that from your love, I will wring it from your shame.

"If I do not receive any reply to this to-day, to-night I will call at King's Bench Walk. Then if you still refuse me, by the Heaven that will judge us both, neither you nor any other man shall ever again have a chance of granting or refusing me anything! For Heaven's sake, father, do not drive your own child to a desperate death.—Your unfortunate Son, CHARLIE."

As the old lawyer read this letter for the twentieth time, he crushed it up in his hand and flung it into the waste basket.

"The fool!" he said, bitterly; "he thinks to intimidate me by his threats! Me! He should have known me better before this. Fear of anything man can do never yet turned me from my path. Even if I thought him capable of doing as he says, what do I care? But, if he does not know me, I know him. He give up his precious life! Pshaw! The braggart, the weakling—he was always fond of acting."

Striving to work up his rage and contempt, Serjeant Stronge rose to his feet and walked up and down the room.

"And he'll come here to-night, will he?" he said, as he walked. "I think he should be tired of that trick by this time! How many times has he knocked at my door here and in Pump Court, and what has he ever gained but insult and rebuffs? What a pitiful creature he is! Always whining that he is starving, and that his scullery-maid and her brat are starving too! Why, if he were more of a man I might pity him, but—pah—his spiritlessness disgusts me as much as his marriage. If I had

been in his shoes, would I have begged and snivelled? No, never! I should have worked—worked like the man I am—and made my way in the world without a human being's aid. That's what I did do, and see what I am now, and what—oh, Heaven—what I should have made him if he would only have let me!"

And the old lawyer flung himself with a sob into his chair; and groaned over the ruin of his hopes, the baulking of his life's ambition!

He sat there silently for a long time gazing into the fire, and thinking over again and again the things that might have been, and the things that were. What hopes, what high hopes and soaring ambitions had once been his, and how this foolish lad, in a single moment, had wrecked and blasted them all for ever! How vain are human wishes and human foresight, when all the work and plans of a wise and strong man's life can be brought to nothing by the folly of a boy!

He sat there for a long time thinking, not sadly so much as fiercely and furiously. Then he roused himself with a start, and looked at the great old clock in the corner.

"It's getting late," he muttered. "He will be here soon. What shall I do? Open to his knock, and bid him begone? Or let him knock and knock, and depart unanswered?"

He sat silently thinking which course he should adopt. Suddenly his meditations were interrupted.

"Tap, tap, tap!" sounded with startling abruptness on the outside door.

The old lawyer was taken off his guard, and started violently at the sound. His son had arrived before he was expected.

Sitting erect in his chair, Serjeant Stronge felt for once in his life irresolute. Should he see his son, or should he not? What would he say or do if he did see him? And if he did not see him, what would happen then?

A struggle was going on in Serjeant Stronge's mind; a struggle, though he might not have admitted it, between anger and love, between resentment and pity. In spite of all his hard thought and harder language about his boy; just then it was an even chance whether he should forgive him or not.

Unfortunately—as often happens in the most serious of human affairs—the event was decided by an accident. Charlie Stronge only knocked once at his father's

door—he waited but a minute. Then, hopeless apparently of an answer, he turned, and, with a broken heart, went slowly down the long stairs. If he had but knocked twice, if he had waited only a moment more—who can say what way the terrible struggle in his father's breast might have gone? As it was, the event was decided before that struggle had come to an end.

Eagerly, breathlessly the old lawyer listened to the young man's heavy footsteps as they resounded on the boarded steps. Tramp, tramp, slowly and sadly the sounds came up to him; faint and more faint they gradually became; now they came from the second landing; now from the first; now they ceased.

As the echo of the last footstep died away, the great old clock in the corner chimed out the hour loud and clear. It struck ten.

Recalled to himself by the sound, the old lawyer, with a gasp, threw himself back in his chair, and realised that an issue perhaps of life and death had been decided for ever.

"Let him go," he said to himself, after a pause. "Let him go; he'll do himself no ill. I dare say he'll be back again to-morrow."

Though he said this for his own comfort, he felt no assurance that it would prove true. He knew that his son was in desperate straits—he knew that he had attained the very limits of human misery; and though he believed that he was of a weak and irresolute nature, still he felt that it was just weak and irresolute natures that were the most ready to resort to fearful measures when in dire distress. The strong man hopes against hope, and struggles against fate itself; the weak one gives up the contest soon, and abandons himself to a hopeless and reckless despair.

These reflections now pressed on the old lawyer's mind with fearful weight. What if Charlie did as he had threatened, and took away his life? That dreadful question stuck in his mind. It would not go away; it would give him no peace, no rest. Do what he would, there it remained at the door of his conscience, knocking, knocking continually, and imperiously demanding an answer.

Now that the supreme trial of his determination had come, it broke completely down. All the old deep love of his hand-

some, dashing boy came rushing back upon him. Visions of what he had been appeared before his aching memory. He remembered him as a pretty, prattling child by his dead mother's knee—that loved and lost one whom the old lawyer had cherished and mourned for with all the energy of his fierce, strong soul—; as the little laughing schoolboy who used to brighten everything around him by the sunshine of his presence; as the lad setting out for Oxford full of anticipations of pleasure and success, full of the exultant, intoxicating spirit of youth. And to think that, perhaps, at that very moment the black waters of the Thames rolled over that youthful face, over those glancing eyes, now closed and dull in death—the thought was agonising, maddening!

Torn by sorrow, remorse, and shame, the unhappy old man spent the night wandering aimlessly about the room, and sitting in his easy-chair, gazing into the dull embers on the hearth. For him there was no rest or sleep that night; and when the wintry morning broke, it showed his face—that but the previous day had been full of a high, indomitable spirit—weak and nervous as a frightened child's.

Dawn was slowly brightening into day, when the old lawyer's excited ear caught the sound of footsteps slowly ascending. At length they reached the Serjeant's floor. A knock! It is at his door. Was it Charlie? or was it—

Almost fainting with a fearful apprehension, the old lawyer staggered along the corridor to the door. He opened it. A policeman was there.

"Serjeant Stronge, sir?" he said, touching his helmet.

"Yes," answered the Serjeant, hoarsely.

"Begging your pardon, sir," said the policeman, "for disturbing you, sir—"

"What is it?" asked the old lawyer, now almost unable to stand with faintness.

"Well, sir, we found this on the body of a young man found in the river, and we thought you might know something of him."

He handed the Serjeant a slip of paper. Steadying his trembling form against the lintel of the door, the old lawyer examined it. There he found these words scribbled in his son's hand:

"Mr. Serjeant Stronge, King's Bench Walk. I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called his son."